



Cleveland Municipal Court

JUSTICE CENTER
1200 ONTARIO STREET
CLEVELAND, OHIO 44113

MICHAEL L. NELSON, SR.
JUDGE

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(216) 664-4994
fax (216) 664-4949

Via Hand Delivery
May 1, 2019

The Honorable Justin Herdman
Office of the United States Attorney
801 W. Superior Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio 44113

Dear Attorney Herdman,

It's been six months since I first sounded the alarm regarding the inhumane treatment of detainees and overcrowding and understaffing at the Cuyahoga County Jail. My action was precipitated by the alarming news that six inmates had died in a matter of just over four months, while in the custody of the County Jail.

That number has since increased to eight deaths in less than a calendar year.

The last death followed a series of inspections by numerous agencies that determined, among other findings that the jail was understaffed, overcrowded, poorly maintained, lacked supervision, rodent infested and failed to provide basic medical care to detainees.

In fact, things were discovered to be bad enough that the U.S. Marshall's Office removed individuals that it had housed at the jail and transferred them to other facilities.

Now we hear that several individuals connected with the jail have been indicted for numerous crimes associated with their stewardship of the jail. While indictment in and of itself is by no means an indication of one's culpability in wrongdoing, they do serve to underscore the ongoing dysfunction in the operation of the jail. Such dysfunction has eroded public confidence in the management of the jail and directly impacts on the fair pursuit of justice, which is the lynchpin of a civilized society.

It appears from all of the preliminary reports that the County cannot protect the rights of detainees without the intervention of your department and it's time for you to consider meeting with the County to carve out a consent decree with specific steps outlined to insure that it operates according to federal and state guidelines.

Respectfully,


Judge Michael L. Nelson, Sr.